

Nadia De Leon
Visual Anthropology
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Dr. Georgina

The Blair Witch Project: Manipulating Reality
An analysis of the faux vérité improvised filmmaking process.

Methodology

The Blair Witch Project was filmed in real time, even though the filmmakers knew that only a few moments of footage would be used in the final cut, because they wanted to maintain the continuity and reality. The actors really took all of the shots that make up the movie. The only scene dubbed is one towards the beginning when Heather and Josh pick up Mike, and there is music playing in the car. For every other scene in the movie, the filmmakers utilized all real sound recorded by the actors, except some added-in ambiance effects (like wind, crickets, etc.)

During the day one of the filmmakers would shadow the actors. The filmmakers would then watch each day's tapes and make development notes to plan the next day. For example, the car filmed driving in front of the character's car when they drive away from the cemetery is actually the production car. In their notes, the filmmakers state: "To ensure authenticity and realism in *The Blair Witch Project*, the filmmakers employed several techniques. First, the actors improvised their scenes from start to finish which provides a raw, emotional texture. As a result the filmmaking experience felt more like something akin to boot-camp than a film set." The directors and producers give us an example in their commentary: Heather's narration at the cemetery was written by her for

her character's film within the film. "They give us so much good stuff for this film. It's unbelievable how many good lines they come up with."

In the commentary, the directors and producers also tell of how, during the filming of the first scene, before the characters leave the house, the filmmakers were sitting outside the house with binoculars "nervous as hell," wondering how things would turn out.

During the filming in the town of Burkettsville, the actors were asked to go out and interview the townsfolk about the legend of the Blair Witch. According to the filmmakers notes included in the DVD, the actors did not know which of the people they interviewed were planted actors, and who were true townsfolk. This dynamic was intended to produce natural reactions from the town's people, while also making sure that the planted actors told the lines necessary for the movie to make sense, and for the audience to understand the legends from which the following events would be based.

The filmmakers had the actors pack their own backpacks and truly hike them around the whole time. Five to eight people were doing all the set up ahead of the actors in the woods. The filmmakers' notes from the special edition DVD add:

"Although the actors rehearsed the material, situations placed them in unfamiliar territory. The actors constantly underwent disorientation of time and place. The filmmakers managed to achieve and preserve that unnerving reality by 'massaging' the characters' movements; they planted unannounced actors, props and civilians throughout the production. Easy to employ while the actors were in town, this technique grew more complicated once the narrative entered the Maryland forests. In the woods no communication existed between the filmmakers and the actors. To navigate their way through the forest, the actors had to rely on GPS. They received notes, gear, and food via baskets marked with Day-Glo orange bicycle flags."

“Taco” was the keyword for getting out of character. For example, one of the nights the crew was running around their tent scaring them for thirty to thirty-five minutes. Afterwards, they waited for them to go back to sleep before setting the rock piles around their tent. However, the actors kept waking up when the filmmakers approached. Finally the filmmakers had to yell “Taco” so the actors would know to ignore them, which meant that the next morning the actors had to actually pretend being surprised by the rock piles. This shows how the filmmakers weren’t going for simply well acted scenes, but they were meaning to truly scare and surprise the actors to get genuine reactions on tape, very similar to the “production of reality” techniques championed by Jean Rouch in films such as *Chronicle of a Summer*, on the methods of what we have now come to know as “Reality T.V.”

During the fourth night, the characters hear the noise of children around them and a baby screaming. What actually happened is that the filmmakers were actually standing around with three boom-boxes with recorded sound of children to wake them up. The characters wake up, panic, and run away from the tent. The filmmakers had to plan an escape path the actors could run through “without poking an eye out or tripping over and killing themselves.” Instructions to learn the path and practice before hand were in that day’s notes. As they are running away, we can hear Heather yelling “What the fuck was that?” which was her reaction to one of the crew members dressed all in white with white pantyhose over his head running alongside. That night, which happened to be the coldest night they had, one of the crew members fell in the creek. The others ended up having to take off different sections of their clothes to give him dry clothes so he wouldn’t go into hypothermia walking the mile and a half out of the woods. Once the sun came up the

actors return to their camp and find that people messed with their tents, backpacks, and water.

The fifth night Josh disappears. During the following night, the other two characters hear him screaming and try to find him. The next morning they find a bundle of branches that was left at the door of their tent. Heather later finds there is a pouch in between the branches, filled with human blood, hair, and teeth.

The last scene, once Mike and Heather get to the house, is pretty much real time. The editing consisted mainly of just cuts back and forth from film to video (Mike's and Heather's cameras respectively). The audio comes entirely from Mike's camera. When Mike turned a corner at the basement, the filmmakers nailed him (one caught him and one caught the camera), and then asked him to stand in the corner for Heather's last scene.

Dealing with improvised reality

In his documentary, *Cinema Vérité: Defining the Moment*, Peter Wintonick likens cinema vérité to “a window onto real life and real issues which freed the documentary from conventionally staged shots.” The documentary works with a definition of cinema vérité as “the opposite of the scripted, the conceived, the planned, the argument-led documentary. It was finding bits of life and weaving them together into a coherent whole. Wanting what you got, rather than going out to get what you want.”¹ This definition most definitely applies to *The Blair Witch Project's* filmmaking process, including the

¹ Kelleher, Ed., *Cinema Vérité: Defining the Moment*, Film Journal, 7/1/2000
<http://www.allbusiness.com/services/motion-pictures/4430056-1.html>

filmmakers' attempts to induce certain reactions from the actors, and the improvised dialogue based on a plot-only screenplay.

The improvised filming process of *The Blair Witch Project* involved the risks of many things going wrong unexpectedly, but it also allowed for the possibility of serendipitous strikes of good luck. A good example of the latter is the little known fact that the lady with the baby, whom the actors interview in Burkettsville, was not a planted actor but really a stranger! She claims to have heard the legend of the Blair Witch, and she is the one to mention a supposed Discovery Channel documentary – and it was totally ad lib! It truly worked out surprisingly well. According to the filmmakers' commentary, they knew they wanted to keep that scene from the first time they saw it. They uselessly tried to track her down for weeks “with a private detective and everything.” They ended up using the video release they had from her. Other interviewed townsfolk include the waitress at the restaurant and the old man, from whom they were able to obtain signed release forms.

An example of how little control the filmmakers actually had over the filming process took place as soon as the actors got to the woods. They got out of the car, and put their backpacks on. Then, they started walking the wrong way! According to their commentary, the filmmakers “thought they were screwed and they weren't going to be able to move the actors around the woods for six days and ever find them again.” Luckily the actors noticed and got back on track. However, the well-justified filmmakers' nervousness did not stop after that. In the first scene of the characters crossing the log bridge, the filmmakers were actually hiding high on the other side, watching. If the actors fell into the river, the equipment and film would have really been lost!

In many occasions, the filmmakers had to adapt to the circumstances. For example, Coffin Rock was originally written to be a bridge. The filmmakers could not find one in the location, but stumbled upon the rock and rewrote it. They had also planned to take Mike out, but ended up having to take Josh out to get a different dynamic between the characters. Plenty of scripted scenes, like one of Josh climbing a tree, did not make it to the final cut, while other improvised scenes did.

On their way to the cemetery, the actors indeed got lost and walked an extra mile and half up and down the trail, while the cemetery was their feet to their left. The filmmakers had put the rocks up hours before, and the actors arrived much later than expected. Luckily, there was still light enough to film the scene then.

Another interesting unexpected occurrence derives from an impromptu conversation about Gilligan's island. The actors were joking around when Mike comes up with "the Skipper line," which is considered by many the funniest line of the movie. However, to be able to use it, the filmmakers ended up having to pay rights, which turned it into the most expensive line of the movie, even though it was unplanned.

Another unplanned line was that in which Josh says to Heather: "I see why you like this camera so much, it's not quite reality. It's a filtered reality. It's like you can pretend it's not really happening." It is a superb line regarding separation from reality, psychological escapism as a way to deal with traumatizing events, and even the philosophical aspects of "reality" through a camera lens. Additionally, that line brilliantly explains to the audience at least one of Heather's potential motivations to continue filming the whole time – a premise upon which the whole film depends. In their

commentary to the DVD, directors and producers confess that it was not a prompted line, and agree that it was a necessary and pivotal line in the film.

Most of the time, the filmmakers did not know what the actors were doing and how they were reacting, and had to adjust on the go. For example, after they placed the bundle of sticks in front of the actors' tent, one of the filmmakers happened to stay behind, because he wanted to watch their reaction when they found the teeth. So, he saw Heather throw the bundle away. He called on the radio and said: "They are walking away and they are not looking at the sticks!" So the filmmakers had to quickly decide whether to interfere and tell them to look between the sticks, which they did.

The filmmakers had to deal with the unexpected because of their chosen methodology, sometimes for the good sometimes for the bad, through the whole process. When they were out looking for locations for the film, they just happened to find the abandoned house. They had to remove the graffiti, get nephews and friends' children to print their hands with paint on the wall, reinforce some of the floors, etc.

Once they got to the editing room, the filmmakers also found themselves surprised by many accidentally well composed shots. For example, there is a scene about an hour into the movie, in which Mike is talking, sitting at the bottom left corner of the frame, with the woods filling most of the scene, which reflects their isolation exquisitely. Another wonderful example happens during Heather's confessional scene at the end. It turns out she thought she was framing her whole face. However, the composition with just her eyes and her nose in the bottom right corner of the frame turned out to be a famous staple of the movie.

The “documentary on a veritable account” hoax

Many aspects of *The Blair Witch Project* give it the appearance of being a documentary and not a feature film. For example, the fact that it is not produced or distributed by well known large companies, and the fact that the names of the directors and producers are not well known either. Right from the beginning the film appears to be a low-key low-budget film, and the title appearing on regular white font on a plain black background at the beginning of the movie (instead of in a fancy animation accompanied by pretentious music) attests to this. The text that appears immediately afterwards confirms all of the above: “In October of 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland, while shooting a documentary. A year later their footage was found.”

This documentary film claims to portray what happened to a group of film students while making a documentary on the Blair Witch. Therefore, it is supposed to be nothing less than a documentary on a documentary. Many details are painstakingly taken care of to make this statement believable.

The raw footage look

Because the film is supposed to have been put together from the found raw footage shot by the disappeared students, the entire film most appear crude and unedited. Some characteristics of raw footage, which are always edited out of films, but which we can observe in *The Blair Witch Project*, include out of focus and shaky scenes. We can also hear them talking to each other. In fact, one characteristic trait of raw footage which we find throughout the movie is the audible “voice behind the camera.” We can hear the person behind the camera talking to those in front of the camera. Moreover, we can see

raw footage of them filming and/or holding sound equipment, which would obviously have been taken out of edited footage. We also run into unedited mistakes as they speak. Additionally, the sound is natural, sometimes difficult to understand, and does not at all appear to be edited.

A documentary filming endeavor

The filmmakers also had to make sure that the footage supported the claim that the students who disappeared were indeed trying to film a documentary on the Blair Witch. In fact, there is a clear distinction between two types of footage from which the film is put together. The shots that were apparently meant to be part of the actual documentary the students were filming appear in black and white, and were being filmed on a 16 mm camera, with sound being recorded on cassettes through a DAT. On the other hand, Heather had also brought with her a Hi-8 color video camera, which she used to document their documenting process.

The change in Heather's tone of voice and modulation on the black and white film footage is also characteristic of documentary narrations. She over enunciates, speaks slower, in a deeper tone of voice, and with a sort of British accent. Additionally, the people they interviewed look like regular people off the street (versus the unusually attractive actors in Hollywood movies).

The convention of the presenter addressing the audience through the camera lens is also characteristic of documentary films. Furthermore, we can observe them asking for a videotaped informed consent from the fishermen they interview, when Heather says: "Can I have your permission to use your videotaped image for the purpose of a documentary titled 'The Blair Witch Project'?" Finally, we can tell that they are not

simply filming their adventure but truly trying to compose a documentary film when they film the rock piles in the cemetery, and later return to film them again at night, presumably to get a darker and scarier image. As Josh puts it: “Same thing, but darker.”

Amateur Qualities

The filmmakers are not only expecting us to believe that what we are watching is true footage filmed with the intentions of being a documentary, but that it was filmed by three film students. This is made obvious, for example, in scenes such as the one in the car, when the characters are driving away from Mary Brown’s house. They discuss technical aspects of the filmmaking process and the equipment, such as depth of field.

Many of the film’s characteristics illustrate their inexperience, including the aforementioned shaky camera and out of focus takes. In the directors’ and producers’ commentary to the film, the filmmakers recognize this is a technical flaw for the film, and state: “but it ends up exemplifying the characters’ inexperience.” The rounded corners of the film’s frame, also give it a homemade movie quality.

Furthermore, throughout the movie we are witnesses to Heather’s amateur interviewing skills. She sometimes puts words on people’s mouths, and often interrupts the interviewees. One example takes place when one of the men they stop to ask questions to on the town’s streets is telling them about Mary Brown. The man is in the middle of a sentence: “She’s old ...” and Heather interrupts: “How was she seen by the community?” When they are interviewing Mary Brown, she is describing to them what she saw in the woods: “She had a shawl...” when Heather interrupts “and she scared you?” A little later, when Mary Brown is talking about the witch’s furry body, Heather interrupts “How about her face?”

True Legend

Whether or not the audience believes the Blair Witch legend is true and accurate, the filmmakers do want to make sure that the audience believes such a thing as the Blair Witch legend actually exists at all. For that purpose, they construct an incredibly detailed mythology around the legend. They come up with a series of chronological events: a Salem-type witch trial in the last century supposedly documented on a rare book, and many cases of disappeared children since then, the most recent one involving the murder of seven children. None of the events are true, nor were they ever believed to be true. However, the filmmakers cunningly present them as historical fact. Additionally, the mention of “a Discovery Channel Documentary on Ghosts and Legends of Maryland which talked about the Blair Witch legend” by one of the interviewed townsfolk gives the whole story credibility.

Believability

One of the basic questions regarding the film which would be obviously raised by the audience involves the fact that the characters had enough battery power in their equipment to last them through the six days. The filmmakers take care of explaining this early on in the film. The characters buy a very large pack of batteries at the store before leaving town, while there are buying their food supplies. In the car one of them actually exclaims: “We have so much battery we could fuel a small country for a month!”

The filmmakers also make sure that it seems understandable that the characters get lost in the woods where they are filming. They show that Heather was leading them, but also show she didn't really know where they were going. For example, when they are on their way back to the car, one of the boys says “I don't remember this,” and Heather

replies: “Well, we have to go a little different to get back because we went there in a curve a little bit. Two more hours max.” Even so, for some people it might have been slightly difficult to believe that the characters could get lost when they actually had a map. However, Mike later takes care of that by tossing it into the river. Something he did without being prompted by the filmmakers to do so.

The fact that the characters are very human young students constantly arguing with each other, also adds a layer of believability to the film. Furthermore, the fact that they seem to be just as clueless as the audience regarding what is happening, also makes it easier for us to believe what is being presented on the screen. For example, when they first hear noises at night, the characters actually toy with the possibility that townsfolk have followed them into the woods to mess with them.

One very important detail that makes it possible for the audience to believe that this is actual footage filmed by the people on the screen and not a fiction film, is not revealed until the credits at the end of the movie: the actor’s names and the characters are the same! This is no trivial detail. If the audience read the actor’s name at the end of the film and realized they were different to the names of the characters, it would have been immediately obvious that it was all fiction.

Finally, the filmmakers went through the trouble of creating actual fake newsreels regarding the disappearance of the characters, and of the police search for them. This “newsreels” are included in the special features section of the DVD and were also available on the widely marketed internet site for the movie, together with all the information regarding the alleged legend of the Blair Witch. In fact, the website includes interviews with Heather’s mother, an image of the “missing” flyer with the pictures of the

three students, pictures of the cops' search, a Channel 6 interview with Josh's father, an interview with two volunteer firefighters that participated in the search, and much more! In fact, the website contains material enough for a whole other documentary on the alleged incident.

Realism

The style of the film is strikingly realistic. One example of that happens on the fourth day. The characters find the "trinkets," as Josh calls them, actually strange symbols made of branches and twine resembling men, hanging from the trees all over an area of the woods. After that, we can see Josh is about to break down. He walks away with a clear expression in his face that shows us he is about to cry. The directors and producers note in the commentary that "in a normal film you would have a big giant scene of Josh breaking down, and in this you only have a two second scene as he walks off out of the frame."

Another very realistic scene that tells the audience that this is no fictional feature film, takes places when Heather is inside the tent while she is sawing with a flashlight in her mouth. You can hardly understand what she is saying. An unintelligible dialogue like that would have no place in a fictional commercial movie.

Perhaps the most realistic, and well known, scene of the entire movie is that of Heather crying with snot dripping down her nose, while she is apologizing in video to her parents and the boys' parents for getting them into that situation. It turns out the actress came up with those lines herself. Furthermore, those were most definitely real tears and real snot. "It's rare to find an actress willing to expose herself like that," remark the directors in the DVD's commentary.

Inconsistencies

Perhaps the first dubious aspect of the film is the fact that there is no mention in the actual film of how the footage “appeared.” In the special features, it is mentioned that anthropology students from another university found the film and cassettes in the house. In fact, that section of the DVD offers very detailed information on how long the footage was kept by the police before they were released. However, none of that information is available in the actual ninety minutes of the film.

One other easy to spot inconsistency takes place while the characters are filming at the Burkettsville cemetery. They talk about tombs of infants who died in the 1940s as evidence of the murder of seven children of the town at that time. However the tomb they film, which indeed reads “infant,” also reads “1907.”

The fact that the actors knew they didn’t have to pack the tents creates one of the movies most often pointed out mistakes, in which the boys are often insisting on Heather to stop filming and go, but they are not putting the tent down – because they knew it would later be put down and left at their next camping ground by the crew!

Manipulating reality through editing

As marvelously illustrated by Tim Asch’s *The Ax Fight*, filmmakers have the ability to manipulate reality acutely, through editing and cutting footage. That which is presented to us as reality after editing could actually be quite different, or in fact completely opposite, to what actually happened in front of the camera. By omitting sections, changing the chronological order, zooming in or cropping, and an infinite

number of other tools and effects, editing and cutting can transform the event being filmed to the point of completely twisting its meaning.

The Blair Witch Project's directors' and producers' commentary gives the audience a fascinating glimpse into what actually happened when the movie was being filmed, compared to what we see in the edited version. For example, the scene of the characters drinking at the hotel is really over 90 minutes – an hour and half in which the characters “get really hammered” and argue a lot. However, the filmmakers only show a few shots from the beginning, giving the audience a completely different impression of the event.

The actual footage filmed by the actors reflects the fact that Josh was in fact the most antagonistic towards Heather throughout the process of filming the movie. In fact, all three of the characters argue considerably more than we are allowed to see. In editing, the filmmakers kept most of the fighting out, and fished for the friendly scenes in order to make the audience sympathize with the characters, especially towards the beginning of the movie. Then, they used the first real big fight the characters get into, and show it as if it was the first fight at all. They chose that particular fight because in that occasion Mike was the most antagonistic. The filmmakers wanted Mike, and not Josh, to be the one to clash with Heather the most. In fact, they cut out a part of the fight “in which Josh said something really nasty to Heather.” It turns out, in the cut version of the scene Josh comes off being the peacemaker.

Another example of this takes place during the morning of the third day. It turns out Heather really went over the top “insulting and bitching at the guys” for not coming out of the tent long enough, or at all, during the night in order to get on film what was

going on outside, to the point that she later had to apologize to them. However, the filmmakers decided to cut that section out of the movie to avoid the audience from antagonizing her character too much

On the night after Josh disappears, the other two actors hear his voice (which is actually him up on a hill with the filmmakers). They look for him for forty-five minutes, which were then edited down to about two. The filmmakers used the actual sound recorded from the actors' video camera, but picked the best visual scenes and the best sound moments and put them together in a non-chronological order. Therefore, even though both the sound and the images are true to what happened that night, the final edited version has been distorted to the point of portraying two minutes which never actually happened – at least certainly not as they appear on the screen.

Similarly, Mike's freak out scene was actually over thirty-five minutes long. The filmmakers found it over the top. According to their commentary, it contained some great moments, but did not further the plot. It was edited down to just a glimpse of him rocking, and then a shot of Heather putting the camera down and hugging him.

Finally, the film as a whole was modified extensively and repeatedly through editing and cutting, according to feedback and audience reaction from numerous test showings – not an uncommon practice, but certainly not often given that much importance or done as many times for feature films.

Manipulating reality through the camera lens

In part because of the chosen angles, and the decisions of the actors' regarding what to film and what not to film, the movie looks like it's in the deep woods, when they

are often near houses. A perfect example of this takes place as the characters first get off the car. The scene looks like an isolated woods area, while there are actual buildings just around the corner – a fact that would not be known to the audience, was it not revealed in the DVD's directors' and producers' commentary.

The fine line between reality and fiction

Because of the improvised nature of the film, it is sometimes difficult to separate the actors from the characters. For example, Josh, the actor, was in fact late in arriving at the time scheduled to begin filming. Therefore, in the film it is shown how his character arrives late to Heather's house to leave for their filmmaking trip.

During the first night one of the characters talks about hearing a cackling. One of the guys says: "If I would have heard a cackling I would have shit in my pants" – and one wonders whether that's him or his character talking.

In one of the many scenes in which they are arguing about Heather's insistence on filming everything, Mike straight out asks her why she is doing that. She answers: "cause we are making a documentary!" To which he replies "Not about us getting lost! We're making a documentary about a witch!" Which is ironic considering: 1) that, in the film, their "found footage" ends up becoming "a documentary about them getting lost," and 2) they are really actors making a fictional film about them getting lost. There is actual irony to Mike's comment in three levels of reality: actuality, the film, and the film within film.

The Blair Witch Project constructs an incredibly complex web of layers of truth. The audience can believe or disbelief what is being presented to them at a number of

different levels. Is what is happening to the character's true? Are the character's real people (actual students who disappeared) and is this real found footage? If so, did a real search for them actually take place as suggested by the provided newsreels and pictures? Even if the story of the disappeared students is not real but made up footage, are the legends of the Blair Witch and the disappeared children real? Any of them? Are they at least believed by some people in the area? Or are they made up legends? Is the book Heather reads out of at Coffin Rock a real book?

At the same time the actors in the screen are also dealing with a disturbingly blurry line between reality and fiction. They know, for example, that the book Heather reads out loud was actually written by the filmmakers, but many of the things that are happening are indeed very real to them. The actors had packed their own backpacks, which they really had to carry around the whole time, as well as the video and sound equipment (although not the tents). In the scene at the market in which we see the characters buying supplies, the actors were really buying their food for the trip with an allowance given by the filmmakers. They really had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the woods. In fact that scene of the boys bothering Heather when she is trying to squat out of sight and pee is real! The actors really did get lost several times, and took longer than expected to make it to the places where they were supposed to be. At night when the filmmakers scared them and they came out trying to catch on film what was going on, it was indeed really cold, and they were indeed woken up from their sleep. Therefore, the actors had plenty of reasons for truly not wanting to be out of their tents. In their commentaries, the directors and produces narrate:

“You can tell how cold the nights are because Heather's hand is shaking. (...) Even with everything that was going on they had to set up that damn tent every

night (...) Even though they always had enough water, they were actually hungry, by the last two days they were only given a power bar and an apple each day (...) You can tell they are exhausted [from their voices, their facial expressions, dragging their feet] (...) You can imagine how easy it is to act frustrated when you are this miserable”

Even though it wasn't real, what was happening prompted real reactions from the actors. For example, Heather and Mike truly did not know that Mike had gotten rid of the map. Therefore, their reaction, as filmed, is pure and real. The scene as a whole, in fact, was totally unplanned, since Mike kicked the map into the river unprompted and out of real frustration, according to the directors' and producers' commentary.

Another honest and real reaction is that of Mike and Heather upon finding the house when they are following Josh's voice. The actors did not know they were going to be led to a house. Neither did they know what was going to happen inside the house, or whether they would find Josh. The filmmakers were actually leading them with well timed boom boxes with the recording of Josh's voice: first from the camp to the house, then up in the attic, and finally down at the basement.

The filmmakers carefully manipulated the actors' state of mind throughout the filmmaking process, exploiting the relationship between fear and exhaustion or desperation. According to the filmmakers notes, producer Gregg Hale used some past army-training techniques he had experienced in order to heighten the actors' realist portrayals. Hale adds:

“Normally, your conscious mind insulates you from extreme fear. But, if we could wear down the actors mentally and physically – by the end of the film, when really intense things are happening – they'd tap into a part of their psyche they normally don't touch. The results show their fear as primal.”

Definitions of Reality

The Blair Witch Project was truly an experimental film in its approach to the filmmaking process, reviving some of the methodology of cinema vérité, and foreshadowing many of the techniques now common in Reality T.V. The filmmakers created a parallel universe for the movie, with its fantasized past and its made up present. They created records to document the mythology behind the movie and the evidence surrounding the alleged events leading up to the release of the movie. Just as impressively, they effectively manipulated the actors' circumstances with a clear goal of obtaining real reactions and true raw footage for their film. In the process they enraptured themselves, the town of Burketsville, the actors, the movie's audience, and the website's visitors, in a complex and multi-layered web of realities.